

Dear Friends,

JOHN 10 11-18

Jesus says "I am the good shepherd". What does it mean for Jesus to be a "good" shepherd? Partly it means that he is good at being a shepherd. He has the knowledge, skill and experience which make him the ideal person to take care of the sheep.

However, the Greek word which we translate "good" means more than just being good at something. It also means "beautiful". Jesus is the beautiful shepherd, the attractive shepherd. All the sheep want him to be their shepherd. All the sheep want to be in his flock.

Our passage shows some of the things about Jesus that make him a good, beautiful shepherd. One thing that stands out for me is the knowledge that Jesus has of his sheep. He says, "I know my own and my own know me". What does it mean for Jesus to know his own? You are one of Jesus' own. What does it mean for Jesus to know you?

The Greek word that is translated "know", suggests an understanding that is complete. Jesus knows you perfectly, totally, absolutely. I wonder how that makes you feel. I'm not sure if I want anyone to have complete knowledge of me. It may be best that there are some things which others don't know. If you understand what I'm saying, you too may feel a bit uneasy about Jesus knowing you through and through.

It's important to remember that it's Jesus who has this complete knowledge. He is not distant from you. He is not looking down on you disapprovingly from a far-away place. Neither does he only know about you. There may be many people that you know about. You may have a particular interest in some famous person, it could be someone from history or a celebrity. You may know many things about them, but you don't really know them.

The knowledge that Jesus has of you is not like that. Jesus knows you intimately. He knows you from the inside. He is the word of God who has been made flesh and has lived among us. He therefore understands what you go through. He has experienced the things that cause you stress. He has experienced your suffering. He sympathises with your weaknesses. He has in every way been tested and tempted as you are. He has walked a lifetime in your shoes. He is a shepherd who knows what it's like to be a sheep. He even knows what it's like to be snatched and taken away in the mouth of a wolf. John's gospel gives us not only the picture of Jesus as a shepherd but also of Jesus as a sheep. In John, Jesus is crucified in the afternoon of the day when the preparations were made for the Passover. This was when the sheep to be eaten at the meal were sacrificed. Jesus lays down his life at the moment when the lives of the sheep are taken. He becomes one with them. He becomes a sacrificial lamb. Jesus knows what it's like to be the sheep who suffers.

The knowledge that Jesus has of you is complete, because he knows you from the inside. He understands you perfectly and that makes him the good, beautiful, attractive shepherd.

God bless you,

Tony